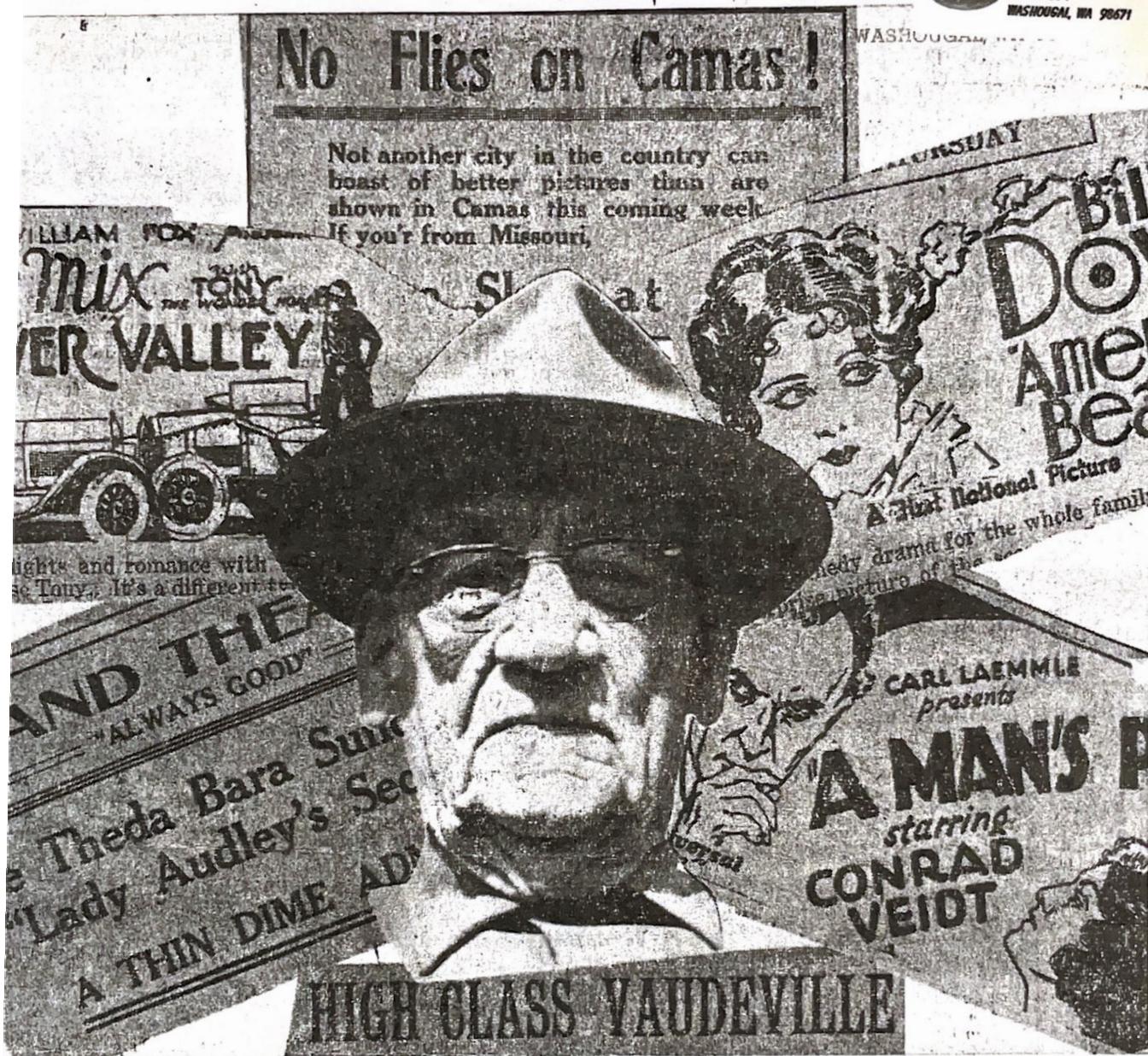


Grand Theatre 1915-16

TWO RIVER

TWO RIVERS HERITAGE MUSEUM
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WASHOUGA, WA



MEMORY LANE—Zane Stoner, who played piano for the earliest movies in Camas, is pictured today against a background of old movie billings taken from the Camas Post. Grand theatre in 1916, for instance, ran Charlie Chaplin and Fatty Arbuckle six-reel comedies with admission 5 cents for

children and 10 cents for adults. Stoners' job was to accompany each scene with suitable music to help set the mood. Stoner has ranched in the Washougal area in recent years but just lately has moved back to Camas.—Post-Record photo.

Kids Stayed in Seats As Piano Music Opened Old Silent Five-Reelers

Every seat in the house has been sold at 10 cents each. Theouselights dim and a flickering image flashes on the screen. The man hunched over the piano directly beneath the screen strikes a chord and the people of Camas are watching the magic of moving pictures as Theda Bara in "Lady Audley's Secret" is unfolded.

Scenes such as this are root-

bad part, it ruined my eyesight," recalls Stoner, who has had to wear glasses since those days.

"Sitting right under the screen, with the poor quality of films in those days, watching every scene to know what number to play was awfully hard on the eyes."

Stoner swears he never had a piece of music before him during the hundreds of hours he

Tom Miller owned the Grand theater in those days. Stoner doesn't remember exactly where it was located but believes it was in the block now containing Bilby's and the Turf restaurants.

Admission was 10 cents for all in 1916 — he believes it may have been 5 cents before that — and the youngsters used to swarm to the shows during the matinees. Unlike some youngsters of today, the boys and girls of that era went directly to their seats in the show and stayed there.

"They liked the comedies," he remembers, "especially Charlie Chaplin and the Keystone Cops."

The pianist usually had a

drummer to help him build up the excitement of the old silent five and six-reelers and in this case it was Tom Miller's son.

Stoner, who came from the middle west in 1908, followed a musical career for many years, both in and out of the theater, playing all over the west. He later had his own band here and used to play for dances in and around Camas-Washougal. "The farmers used to think nothing of hitching up their teams, driving many miles and then dancing all night," he recalls.

Stoner, who has lived most of the past years in Washougal, just recently moved to Camas. He has given up the piano, except for "fooling around once in a while with it."